1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
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over from previous days. The female trees bear fruit in May, and the pulp of this is eaten, generally after roasting the fruit on an earthenware crock and breaking off the rind. They also eat the unripe seeds and seedlings, as well as the roots. They collect the seed and leave it to germinate in pits; they propagate the trees also from root cuttings.

Individual ownership in the trees is to some extent recognized, not necessarily, however, in the owner of the land. There is a sort of village arrangement as to the trees to be tapped by each family, permitting a rough rotation where trees are plentiful, so as to give them a much needed rest from tapping. The Koyas and Dorlas sacrifice a fowl or a goat at the foot of the first tree tapped, and the sacrificial victims are then taken to the Village Mother's shrine and eaten there by the men.

Date-palm The *sindi* (*Phoenix sylvestris*) is occasionally tapped in the Bison-horn country by making an incision in the bark below the crown of the tree.

Mahua The *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) is common everywhere except in the Abujhmar hills, and it is the spirit distilled from it that is sold at the State excise shops, except for a few toddy shops around Konta. There is very little illicit distillation, the State liquor distilled by licensees at outstills being very cheap, and the pass rules enabling Marias fairly easily to get an adequate supply of the spirit for the religious and domestic or social occasions at which its consumption is obligatory. The State does not tax the tapping of the sago-palm and toddy-palm, but merely tries to prohibit the sale and to limit the quantity of the resulting spirit which individuals may possess.

The Parjas and Bison-horn Marias sometimes make a wine from *mahua*, said to be red in colour, by several successive boilings and strainings of *mahua* flowers. It is called *suram*; I have never been able to get hold of any.

Landa *Landa*, a cause of half the homicide committed in Bastar, is the favourite intoxicant of the Bison-horn Marias, but is taboo to the Hill Maria. It is made of equal portions of husked rice or *kuthi* and *mandia* (*Eleusine coracana*). The rice or *kuthi* is soaked well in water, strained off and pounded to a paste. The *mandia* grain is first damped and allowed to sprout, then dried in the sun for three or four days, and soaked, strained and pounded like the rice or *kuthi*. Both are then well mixed. They then take an earthenware *handi*, with holes in the bottom, and cover the holes with a lattice of bamboo slices, on which they place *siari* leaves. The mixed rice or *kuthi* and sprouted *mandia* are piled on these leaves. The *handi* is then placed on a *handi* of

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economic disaster caused by the arbitrary stopping of their *dahi*, *podu* or *jalapod* cultivation. They said that they did not need this for profit, but to save their lives. 'They urged that if *jalapod* were allowed in a reasonable manner they would always be able to produce enough corn even in years of deficient or irregular rainfall. The men said that in the former days of *jalapod* cultivation they usually cultivated a plot for two years and then left it for five or six years, within which short period *palas*[1] and other forest growth grew high enough for them to cut and burn again.'[2]

Mirkal, Pirmeli and surrounding villages are within the orbit of Allapilli and Ahiri, and the average Maria was clearly exposed to Hindu culture contact, of which the outward sign was the wearing of coats and shorts purchased from Ahiri market or from itinerant Mahar pedlars.

The *District Gazetteer* records that the Maria house in the remoter parts of the zamindaris is occasionally very substantial, with walls formed of barked logs laid horizontally and kept in position by upright posts, the interstices being daubed with mud and the whole being thatched with jungle grass.[3] There still are many substantial huts in the villages between Allapilli and Lahiri, but I formed the impression that the standard of housing had deteriorated, possibly because of stricter regulation of felling of trees for domestic purposes.

On the twenty-three miles drive from Pirmeli to Bhamragarh we passed several villages rich in toddy palms, and often saw Marias climbing the tree trunks by rough 'ladders' lashed to the trunks consisting of bamboo stems with the stumps of their side-shoots cut short to act as rungs. The climbers carry, slung round their waist and hanging down like tails, thick bamboo tubes to catch the tapped juice, as described on page 168, sometimes also they take up big gourd bottles. The Provincial Government has for a long time pursued a wiser excise policy in South Chanda than in other tribal areas, of allowing Marias free tree-tapping licences for domestic consumption in certain scheduled villages. The licences are valid for three years and the number of trees that may be tapped is restricted according to the population of the village and the number of trees available for tapping. This applies in much of the Maria country to the *caryotis urens* or sago-palm, the juice of which, as in Bastar, is much preferred to that of the ordinary toddy palm. This privilege had been accorded only to 239 villages of Sironcha tahsil and 58 of Garchiroli tahsil. The selection of villages had been somewhat eclectic; some large villages with only a small Maria or

[1] *Butea frondosa.*
[2] *The Aboriginal Problem*, p. 185.
[3] *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 102.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Gond element had been scheduled, and many others omitted. It was unsound also to confine the privilege to Marias and Gonds, for there are many other aboriginal or semi-aboriginal tribes, such as Pardhan, Halba, Nagarchi, Thoti and Ojha, and artisan, grazier and untouchable castes living in close symbiosis with the Marias, who should get this concession; such an extension would reduce cases of illegal tapping, possession, sale and transfer, and minimize excise subordinate officials' opportunities for harassment and extortion. One of the worst agents of exploitation in aboriginal areas has been the Kalar excise contractor. The Maria here, thanks to this toddy and sago-palm concession, and the availability therefore in his village of this free source of mild intoxicant and the yeast vitamin, has long been far freer of economic thraldom to the Kalar than the other aboriginals in the province who have not had this concession. Moreover the Maria does not seriously abuse this privilege, except perhaps by occasionally selling or giving toddy to non-Marias. I strongly opposed a Nagpur proposal that 'a beginning should be made in the direction of regulating the drinking of toddy by the Marias of Sironcha' who, it was said, 'literally subsist on toddy for some months of the year and are drunk most of the time'. There may be some truth in this theory of drunkenness in regard to the teluguized plains villages of Sironcha outside the zamindari, as noted of similar South Bastar villages on page 168. But of the Ahiri Marias it is quite false. For one thing the morning and evening climb of the palm-trees by rough bamboo ladders calls for nerve, and would be impossible for a drunkard. All through this tour I never saw a Maria drunk on toddy. Nor in the average Maria village are there enough tappable trees available to cause a tenth of this alleged general intoxication.

Just near Bhamragarh in one village bitter weeping came from a woman whose husband had been hauled off that morning for illicit tapping of toddy in an excise raid. As usual the main lament was not so much against this being treated—to my mind needlessly—as an offence, as against the social consequences of being handcuffed and imprisoned. Here we were close to the Kasansogh Togh or Kasansur Turri and other islands of the Indrawati formerly the subject of a boundary dispute between Chanda and Bastar, which I had settled in my voyage down the Indrawati from Kutru in 1927; across the river lay Pharasnar, headquarters of a sub-zamindari of Kutru zamindari, where I had then camped. The ethnographic map on page 40 marks the population of the Bastar bank here as mixed Dorla and Hill Maria, or Hill Maria who have almost become Dorla; and on page 52 I have noted that though on both sides of the river the villagers seem to be of Hill Maria origin and still exchange

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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he would repay with 50 per cent. interest.[1] Although it is clear that these Teli, Kalar and Telugu money-lenders do levy an exorbitant toll on the Maria villagers' produce, it is equally clear that they are fulfilling a necessary function, which has become the more necessary since the stopping of *podu* or *jalapod* cultivation below the hills has restricted the Marias in most villages to permanent rice cultivation on small acreages always dependent on seasonal rainfall evenly distributed in time. If such money-lenders are excluded, then they must be replaced by Government grain depots and village grain banks.

Of Maria funeral rites the *Gazetteer* observes that a stone or a carved post about five feet high is usually put up to mark the spot where a man's body has been cremated, and that 'sometimes one comes across a forest glade strewn with these memorials, the only sign of some deserted village, the very name of which has perished'.[2] Many rows of carved wooden posts may be seen between Bhamragarh and Lahiri, while at Lahiri itself I saw scores of such posts and of the small cromlechs (*kanal-garya* or 'thrones of the Departed') described on page 273, and mentioned in the *Gazetteer*[3] as built on the spot where the body was burned. The top of one of these very substantial funerary posts, or *kanal-gutta*, photographed at Lahiri, is reproduced as one of the illustrations in this Supplement. Noticeable are the carved wooden horns, between which is a carved wooden bird, probably a hornbill. The wooden horns are common, and probably are a modern symbol of the cow formerly sacrificed at the erection of a menhir or wooden *kanal-gutta* by Hill Marias[4] and Bison-horn Marias[5] throughout Bastar: the funerary customs of the Chanda Marias seemed, however, to be Hill Maria in type, and this was confirmed by oral enquiries at Lahiri.

The addiction of the Bison-horn Marias and of the Kutru Hill Marias of Bastar to cock-fighting has been described on page 162. I particularly inquired if the weekly cock-fights at Oikal in Ahiri zamindari, there mentioned, and at Lahiri itself still went on. But all cock-fighting among Chanda Marias had for some years been stopped under orders from an inexperienced young European District Superintendent of Police on the theory that it contravened the Gambling Act. But the Marias maintained that, as in Bastar, so here, there had never been cash betting (as, indeed, one might expect in a region where all transactions are still so largely in kind), but the defeated bird had passed to the owner of the winning bird.

[1] For further details, see *The Aboriginal Problem*, pp. 183-4.
[2] *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 100.
[3] Ibidem, loc. cit.
[4] See pp. 278-9.
[5] See p. 281.

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Such iron knives or spurs as were tied on to the cock's legs were very small, and a Lahiri Maria criticized the usual theory that this way of increasing a cock's natural armament is cruel on the ground that if it meant a quicker death for the defeated cock it was merciful. All the headmen promised that if the ban on cock-fights were lifted they would frown on cash or grain betting, and, if we so desired, on the use of iron spurs and knives. Thoughtless officiousness such as that which stopped this favourite tribal pastime is only too typical of the lack of imagination with which officials, great and small, are apt to interfere with all that lends colour to aboriginal life.

Lahiri was one of the chief camps where I questioned the local Marias as to their clan organization, particularly the grouping of clans into phratries according to the number of *Chuddur penk* or Little Gods. I mentioned on pages 194-5 my doubts as to the traditional accounts of this god-grouping among the Chanda Marias. But these accounts go back to Lucie-Smith's 1869 Chanda Settlement Report. A somewhat confusing summary of his account, on page 101 of the *Gazetteer*, seems to imply that there is little difference between the god-grouping of the Raj-Gond, the other Gond tribes of Chanda. Lucie-Smith divided the Raj-Gonds into a four-god group, with the tortoise and crocodile totems, a five-god group with the iguana totem, a six-god group with the tiger totem, and a seven-god group with the porcupine totem: these groups were divided into what the *Gazetteer* calls 'houses or families, distinguished by their family name or *padi*', i.e. into what in this book have been called clans (*pari*), which numbered 28 among the Raj-Gonds, 24 among the Marias and 17 among the Dhurve Gond. Russell and Hiralal (Vol. III, p. 66) say that in Chanda :—

> 'There are four main groups worshipping seven, six, five and four gods respectively, and each group contains ten to fifteen septs. A man cannot marry a woman of any sept which worships the same number of gods as himself. Each group has a sacred animal which the members revere, that of the seven-god worshippers being a porcupine, of the six-god worshippers, a tiger, of the five-god worshippers, the *saras* crane, and of the four-god worshippers, a tortoise. As a rule the members of the different groups do not know the names of their gods, and in practice it is doubtful whether they restrict themselves to the proper number of gods of their own group. Formerly there were three-, two-, and one-god worshippers, but in each of these classes it is said that there were only one or two septs, and they found that they were much inconvenienced by the paucity of their numbers, perhaps for the purposes of communal worship and feasting, and hence they got themselves enrolled in the larger groups. In reality it would appear that the classification according to the number of gods worshipped is being forgotten and the three lowest groups have disappeared.'

They suggested that this conjecture was supported by the fact that in Chhindwara and other localities only two large six-god and seven-god groups remained.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Railways have still, eighty years later, not penetrated the wilderness: the river navigation schemes proved a failure: the coal mines are well to the west. The prophecy has thus been fulfilled, but with a difference: the clearings are fewer and farther between than in Lucie-Smith's day owing to the virtual cessation in Chanda, except around Kuvakodi, of *podu* or *dahi*.[1]

His wise and discriminating approval of *podu* was overlooked soon after the 1922-4 land revenue settlement of the zamindaris in Ahiri and the Garchiroli zamindaris, when, without apparently any order from Government, the local authorities stopped *podu*. The *Settlement Report* had only said that the miscellaneous income received by the zamindars from *jalapod* had under standing orders been omitted from the assets on which land revenue was to be assessed, so that in case it damaged the forests, Government interference might be justified. In every Garchiroli zamindari except Gewardha *jalapod* had gone on until the 1922-4 settlement, but the total area had been found to be only 993 acres. Rao Bahadur Lakshmanswamy, the Settlement Officer, reported that it was never allowed in good quality timber forests, but only where there was a sparse unmarketable forest growth; even then there was a ten years rest between successive fellings and burnings. The rent on each clearing was recovered in grain and not in cash, the quantity per axe varying from 60 lb. in Kotgal zamindari to 200 lb. in Rangi zamindari: the rent was always substantially less for the second than for the first year of a clearing. The Settlement Officer considered that the privilege of carrying on this shifting cultivation contributed indirectly to the expansion of settled cultivation, and believed that the withdrawal of the privilege would probably unsettle the present occupants: he urged therefore no interference; the area was small, the forest valueless, the privilege kept the Marias happy, and the zamindars, alive to the increasing value of their forests since the advent of the railway and road communications, were sufficiently alive to the need of restricting *podu* and charged higher rates for it in the areas nearer the open parts of the district and the railway than in the remote zamindaris.

[1] This has been mentioned already in this Note on pp. 390-1 and 397. *Podu* strictly speaking is the *dippa* or *markon* of the Hill Marias (p. 126), while *jala* or *khamori*, which is really the *dahi* of most of the province and the *penka* of the Bastar Marias, consists in the sowing of rice on low-lying plots where water naturally collects in the rains, after these plots, which generally have no forest growth, have been fertilised in May with the ashes of grass and wood cut beforehand from the adjacent forests and spread over them. On the *podu* plots, light rice, all the minor millets and beans and pulses are sown. When *mandia* (*eleusine coracana*) is sown, the cultivation is known as *sempod*. As general terms in Chanda either *podu* or *jalapod* are used. *Podu* is also the common term in Hyderabad State.

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In Ahiri zamindari *podu* had been stopped even earlier. In 1917 the then Deputy Commissioner inaugurated an active policy of discouraging it in favour of plough cultivation. He decided to allow no *podu* outside village areas, to make each village *gaita* responsible for reporting the name of each *podu* cultivator and the area, as measured by bamboos, cut and sown by him, and to charge rent at the same rate for *podu* as for plough land. Failure to report any cultivation contravening the orders was to be punished in the first instance by a heavy penal rent, and, if repeated, by total prohibition of all *podu* in the village at fault. This drastic restriction was introduced in all the zamindari except the Kuvakodi Hill Maria tract. The proposals were expounded by the Deputy Commissioner at the end of his tour to several hundred *gaitas* assembled for the purpose at Ahiri. This thoughtlessly wide-sweeping measure soon led to the universal cessation of *podu*: the orders gave great scope to minor zamindari officials for harassing the Marias by alleging that their *podu* contravened the restrictions, and in the end it seemed safer to have no *podu* at all. It seems also that ultimately some Deputy Commissioner finally prohibited *podu*, though the order had disappeared when his successor looked for it in 1930.

In all my camps, especially near the Bastar border, across which *podu* is permissible in every village, the bitter complaints of every Maria showed how harshly this had operated: we have already seen how it has delivered them to the tender mercies of the money-lenders. That, moreover, Rao Bahadur Lakshmanswamy's warning that such interference would unsettle the present occupants had been justified, was proved by the widespread migration of Marias to their kinsmen's villages over the Bastar border, with their greater freedom; of this several *gaitas* and zamindars complained, notably in Jharapapra zamindari. I had a conference with the Garchiroli and Drug zamindars at Murumgaon later in the tour, on New Year's Day, 1941. Several of them complained that in the past the district officers had fined them for allowing *jalapod*, and, yet worse, that they were still often being fined for alleged felling, without the Deputy Commissioner's permission, of high tree forest whenever their ryots broke up new lands even for plough cultivation; the ryots then always burn the felled forest growth and raise the first crops on the new land by the traditional method, but officials stigmatize this as *podu*. The zamindars considered that the stopping of *jalapod* had been quite unjustified, and that if it were again allowed, but confined to commercially worthless miscellaneous forest from which at present they derived no income, it would at least bring in something to them, and above all would save the Marias from the effects

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of rice failures such as those of 1939 and 1940. In the former year the Marias, dismayed by the failure of rice on their plough-lands, took the law into their own hands and started cutting *podu* in the east of Garchiroli tahsil and the adjacent Partially Excluded Areas of Drug district, being to some extent incited by emissaries of the leader of an agrarian agitation in the Dondi-Lohara zamindari. It seemed to me that in their present mood they would before long again defy the restrictions and cut *podu* on a wide scale.

I recommended accordingly that their wishes should be met, as it should not be difficult to regulate *podu* by fixing a regular series of sites to be felled in two-yearly rotations. Silviculturally too there was much to be gained by this. When *podu* was first restricted and then prohibited, the miscellaneous forests were allowed to grow up just as they had been left after the last *podu* fellings, with all the old high stumps and crooked or double or treble stems. Even the patches of teak were often useless because the trees had been left to shoot from old undressed stumps. Most of this vast forest around Bhamragarh, Surjagarh and Jarawandi has no commercial value at all, and never will have unless good teak can be grown. In the neighbouring Panabaras zamindari of Drug I found that some forty years before the Court of Wards had initiated a practice of requiring *podu* cultivators to sow teak seed in the *podu* clearings before abandoning them. This did much to produce the fine forest that is now so valuable an asset of that estate. The Marias whom I met in Ahiri, Jharapapra, Aundi, Koracha, Murumgaon, Rangi and Dhanora zamindaris were most appreciative of the idea of *podu* being allowed with this condition of the sowing of teak seed in the second and last year of cultivation. All knew how the Allapilli departmental forest operation had saved the local Marias from economic ruin, and they were quick to realize that conservation of the surviving teak and the growth of teak in areas now to be selected for that purpose and sown with teak at the end of *podu* cultivation would bring teak forests, and therefore ultimately operations such as those at Allapilli, far nearer to their villages in the days of their grandchildren. Besides areas thus earmarked for teak regeneration after *podu*, there should also be fixed areas around each village where *podu* should be allowed indefinitely. The Marias also would welcome the extension to other parts of Ahiri and the other zamindaris of the precedent of the leasing by Government from the Ahiri zamindar of the forests around Allapilli: the surviving teak areas around Surajgarh would for example be suitable leased areas. In all these measures the fullest co-operation of the Marias could without much difficulty be obtained by enlisting the sympathy and support of the *bhumias*, *gaitas*, and *Sendhias*, whose authority remains real and

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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of ghotul leaders; it is distributed when a boy or girl leaves the ghotul after marriage; it is a convenient and compendious means of paying a fine. The chelik offer it to their drums before a wedding, and drink it in honour of Lingo at the end of the Pus Kolang dance.

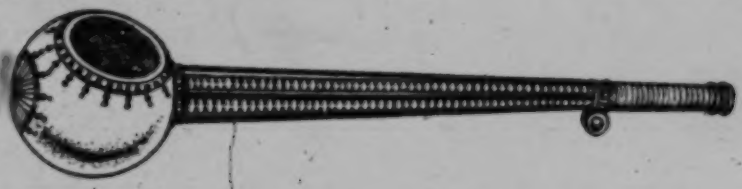

FIG. 13. Brass *arki* used for ladling liquor
Length 8"-9"

This homely drink, so intimately connected with every aspect of their lives, so accessible to the forest-dwellers, so readily and cheaply prepared, may not be distilled by the Muria in Bastar or by the aboriginals anywhere. Its profits must be divided between the State and the middleman. Home-distillation is everywhere forbidden, and the privilege of the manufacture and sale of the spirit is farmed out to contractors in open auction. The business has thus passed into the hands of the most degenerate type of Hindu and Mussalman adventurer, for few aboriginals have either the means or the enterprise to compete with the sophisticated aggression of the outside world in the open market. These adventurers rob both the aboriginals and the State. They dilute the spirit; they put soda in it to cover the fact of their tampering; they make false returns; they use filthy water in unclean pots;[1] their shops are centres of the most degraded type of alien immigrant into tribal territory.

When the National Congress came into power in 1938, they declared that they would not apply their Prohibition laws to Europeans or aboriginals. It would have been more consistent had they allowed the aboriginal to distil his own liquor and had thus ceased to draw revenue from his drinking habits. The real evil of the present system is not that the aboriginal gets drunk, but that in order to get his liquor he is forced into contact with the worst type of alien and outsider.

In this respect conditions in Bastar are better than in many other parts of India. The Excise Department is efficient and understanding; the State controls the mahua trade, but allows the aboriginal great freedom in the use of toddy and salphi. But nothing can atone for the evil of depriving a primitive people of a natural right.

However, once that has been done, the arrangements in Bastar are as good as can be imagined. The spirit is cheap, only two annas a bottle,[2] and passes are freely granted to the Muria and Maria to purchase whatever is needed for ceremonial and social occasions. As a result there appears to be very little illicit distillation in either Kondagaon or Narayanpur. The figures of prosecutions for the five years, 1937–41, are these:

[1] The riddle 'Man and wife piss in the same lane', to which the answer is 'The two pipes of the still', probably hints at the dirt of the Kalar's out-still.
[2] This was in 1941.